

HB 5521: AN ACT REQUIRING LICENSURE OF MASTER'S LEVEL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am a consulting psychologist for DMHAS, DDS, DCF and the Office of Court Evaluations.

As a Licensed Psychologist in Connecticut, I am writing in strong opposition to HB 5521, for the following 5 reasons:

- 1) The term "psychologist" reflects doctoral level providers (both in Connecticut and on a national level);
- 2) Allowing licensure of master's level psychologists would create public confusion regarding provider education and training; and,
- 3) Master's level clinicians are currently able to become licensed in Connecticut as "Licensed Professional Counselors" (LPC's).
- 4) School psychologists are master's level, but they only operate in the school systems and are under the authority of the Department of Education.
- 5) Most Master's level clinicians do not have the requisite training to diagnose and treat complex cases. These are cases usually assigned to Psychologists who have doctoral level training. In my practice, I am frequently asked to take over cases that were assigned to Master's level clinician's, services that were paid for by the State. In reviewing their treatment plans, it is clear that the clinical formulations and treatment interventions they developed were inadequate due to a lack of depth and understanding regarding the case. In some cases, these treatment plans made things worse for the client/patient.

In a climate of increasing need for mental health services (e.g. further deinstitutionalization of people with severe and chronic mental illness, War Vets, school shootings, bullying, etc) and tight State budgets, let's be sure that these vulnerable individuals are receiving the highest quality of care the first time they are introduced to the treatment system.

There is a place for Master's trained clinicians. I believe, however, that their request to be referred to as "Psychologist" is driven by financial ambition rather than the interest of the people they serve. They may argue that more clinician's are needed. Rest assured, there are plenty of professional schools turning out psychologists every year. If Master's level clinician's are interested in being referred to with a higher designation, they should go on for the additional 5 years of training after which I am confident that they will come to understand the phrase, "I didn't know what I didn't know."

For each of these reasons, I am urging you to oppose HB 5521.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rafael Gallegos, PsyD

Psychologist